DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 384 571 SP 036 045

AUTHOR	Wilson, Suzanne M.
TITLE	Is There a Method in This Madness? Craft Paper 94-3.
INSTITUTION	National Center for Research on Teacher Education, East Lansing, MI.
SPONS AGENCY	Office of Educational Research and Improvement (ED), Washington, DC.
PUB DATE	Oct 94
NOTE	22p.
AVAILABLE FROM	National Center for Research on Teacher Learning, 116 Erickson Hall, Michigan State University, East Lansing, MI 48824-1034 ($7.33).
PUB TYPE	Viewpoints (Opinion/Position Papers, Essays, etc.) (120)
EDRS PRICE	MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	Higher Education; Instruction; Intellectual Disciplines; Methods Courses; *Preservice Teacher Education; Secondary Education; Teacher Characteristics; *Teacher Effectiveness; Teaching Methods; *Teaching Skills; Teaching Styles; Thinking Skills
IDENTIFIERS	Teacher Knowledge; *Teaching Perspectives

ABSTRACT

In this essay, the idea of "method" in teacher education is explored. Using the author's own teaching as the site for this inquiry, and drawing on comments from her students, the paper proposes three ways to think of method: the methods of subject matter and the different approaches required; the methods of manner, including personal responsibility and values; and the methods of pedagogical reasoning--thinking and learning. The paper goes on to argue that to be more effective, teachers must learn methods of teaching that go well beyond how to lead discussions, create small group activities, and use technology. (ND)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

NCRTL
price
$7.33

ED 384 571

Craft Paper 94-3

Is There a Method in this Madness?

Suzanne M. Wilson

NCRTL

National
Center for Research
on Teacher Learning

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION
CENTER (ERIC)
☐ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.
☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.
• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Sponsored by the United States Department of Education
Office of Education Research and Improvement

Craft Paper 94-3

Is There a Method in this Madness?

Suzanne M. Wilson

Published by

National Center for Research on Teacher Learning
116 Erickson Hall
Michigan State University
East Lansing, Michigan 48824-1034

October 1994

This work is sponsored in part by the National Center for Research on Teacher Learning, College of Education, Michigan State University. The National Center for Research on Teacher Learning is funded primarily by the Office of Educational Research and Improvement, United States Department of Education. The opinions expressed in this publication do not necessarily represent the position, policy, or endorsement of the Office or the Department.

© 1994 by the National Center for Research on Teacher Learning

Abstract

In this essay, Wilson explores the idea of "method" in teacher education. Using her own teaching as the site for this inquiry, Wilson proposes three ways to think of method: the methods of subject matter, the methods of manner, and the methods of pedagogical reasoning. Wilson goes on to argue that teachers must learn methods of teaching that go well beyond learning how to lead discussions, create small groups activities, and use technology.

National Center for Research on Teacher Learning

The National Center for Research on Teacher Learning (NCRTL)[1] was founded at Michigan State University in 1985 with a grant from the Office of Educational Research and Improvement, United States Department of Education.

The NCRTL is committed to research that will contribute to the improvement of teacher education and teacher learning. To further its mission, the NCRTL publishes research reports, issue papers, technical series, conference proceedings, craft papers, and special reports on contemporary issues in teacher education. For more information about the NCRTL or to be placed on its mailing list, please write to the Publications Clerk, National Center for Research on Teacher Learning, 116 Erickson Hall, Michigan State University, East Lansing, Michigan 48824-1034.

Directors:	Robert E. Floden G. Williamson McDiarmid
Study Directors:	Linda Anderson, Deborah Ball, Daniel Chazan, Helen Featherstone, Sharon Feiman-Nemser, Mary Kennedy, G. W. McDiarmid, Barbara Neufeld, Kenneth Zeichner
Director of Dissemination:	Debra Peterson
Publications Clerk:	Tamara D. Hicks Syron
Office Manager:	Linda Quint

Many papers published by the NCRTL are based on the Teacher Education and Learning to Teach (TELT) study, a single, multisite longitudinal study. The researchers who have contributed to this study are listed below:

Marianne Amarel
Deborah Loewenberg Ball
Joyce Cain
Sandra Callis
Barbara Camilleri
Anne Chang
David K. Cohen
Ada Beth Cutler
Sharon Feiman-Nemser
Mary L. Gomez
Samgeun K. Kwon
Magdalene Lampert
Perry Lanier
Glenda Lappan
Sarah McCarthey
James Mead
Susan Melnick
Monica Mitchell
Harold Morgan
James Mosenthal
Gary Natriello
Barbara Neufeld
Lynn Paine
Michelle Parker
Richard Prawat
Pamela Schram
Trish Stoddart
M. Teresa Tatto
Sandra Wilcox
Suzanne Wilson
Lauren Young
Kenneth M. Zeichner
Karen K. Zumwalt

[1]Formerly known as the National Center for Research on Teacher Education (1985-1990), the Center was renamed in 1991.

Is There a Method in this Madness?

Suzanne M. Wilson

I learned to teach the way most people did: I taught a lot as a child and teenager, I took a few teacher education courses, I had some teachers who served as positive and negative examples. I never had a very high opinion of teacher education or staff development, encountering nothing officially called teacher education—as a prospective or practicing teacher—that served to enhance my work. In college I designed lesson plans, laid out objectives. Yet as I taught, the objectives changed, the lesson plans seemed pale versions—often downright misrepresentative—of what actually happened in class. The inservice folks who came to my schools talked at me, gave me packages of activities to do, yet left me with no sense of why I should use those materials or under what circumstances they worked and didn't. They seemed to think that teacher education was more like a revival meeting than a critical examination of the potential and problems of a certain approach. It's an old story. I think most of us could tell a similar tale.

But teachers aren't the only critics of teacher education. Peers in other university departments sneer at the intellectual level of both our coursework and scholarship. Policymakers call for alternate routes, claiming that we might as well put teachers in classrooms right away and teach them where they need to learn—in schools—while journalists portray our "follies" (Kramer, 1991). The wall of evidence seems high, perhaps insurmountable: Teacher education is dissatisfying to almost everyone.

Suzanne M. Wilson, an associate professor of teacher education at Michigan State University, is a senior researcher with the National Center for Research on Teacher Learning.

So whatever made me think that I should be a teacher educator? Some cynics might say it's because I couldn't teach. When I was younger, a teacher, and still idealistic, I thought that if I became a teacher educator, I could change things for future teachers in ways similar to how teachers might change things for their students. I thought for sure that I could teach new teachers what they needed to know. I'm older now. I'm not so naive about what it takes to learn, and who controls the process.

There's lots wrong with teacher education. But no one has been able to convince me that there is no role for university-based teacher education as a part of the endeavor. There's a lot wrong with schools: Why would we want to leave teacher education up to them? And university teaching is no better off; higher education is equally barraged with contemporary critics (cf., Smith, 1990; Sykes, 1988). Rather than wasting time pointing blaming fingers or throwing the proverbial baby out with the bathwater, I'd rather we all admit we've got a problem and that we could all use a little—or a lot of—help. We need to be critical of ourselves and make some big changes.

This is an essay about re-invention. My own. Specifically, it's about re-thinking the idea of "methods." The folklore of teacher preparation is that "methods" courses are where we all learn how to teach. We learn to create simulations, cooperative groups, jigsaws, role plays, Socratic dialogues, computer-assisted instruction. These methods courses—especially for prospective secondary school teachers—come in subject matter flavors: social studies methods differ from mathematics, English/language arts from physical education. Methods courses are supposed to help you know what to do when you walk into your classroom on Tuesday and have to teach 30 snarling juniors about the Civil War. You learn how to teach, how to discipline, how to test, how to grade.

I work in a teacher education program that is questioning many traditional teacher education structures and practices. While working in that program, I've been thinking some about methods, and what they are in teaching. In this essay, I'd like to lay out some of these thoughts for public review.[1] I begin with some background information about the course I teach that has made me wonder about method. I then go on to propose that there are at least three ways to think about teaching methods that differ from the traditional "methods" we all know.

The Context, My Course

I work in the College of Education at Michigan State University where we've recently transformed our teacher education program in light of calls for the reform of teacher education. We're trying hard to make teacher education a substantive, intellectual experience that rivals that of any other department or college. In our new program, seniors take a year long course (TE 401/402) in which they learn about teaching subject matters. Two days a week, secondary school teachers gather in subject-specific groups to learn about teaching and learning science or mathematics, foreign language or English. Once a week—on Fridays—the subject groups break up and they meet in cross-subject groups to address foundational issues: knowledge, learning, power, diversity, and the like. We want to try integrating these issues throughout their work, rather than offering separate courses like "Educational Psychology" or "Schools and Society."

We do this, in part, because although it's easier for the professors to put things in such boxes, the box-ing makes it hard for teachers to see the connection between the abstract and isolated concepts to the real world of classrooms. How, for instance, do ivy-covered tower theories of power and status help me when Mitch and Maria start pulling each others hair in the middle of our cooperative group work? What in the world am I supposed to do with my "educational psychology" jargon when I need to find a way to make fractions interesting to my inner city fifth graders? We've created the 401/402 sequence to try to confront this problem. During the week, students talk about teaching certain subject matters—and they spend a considerable amount on time in the field watching others do it. On Fridays—using their experiences from other classes and the field—we search out the foundational issues, demonstrating that theoretical and conceptual work can inform both what we see and what we do as teachers in real world settings.

Friday is my piece.[2] My students are prospective secondary school teachers, seniors who have been majoring in mathematics or Spanish, Italian, English, biology, chemistry, history. It's their last year as undergraduates and they're champing at the bit, eager to start their lives, ready to be out in the "real" world. Anyone who's taught teachers or who has read the literature knows them to be a tough audience. After all, I'm from the university. I just don't get it. I haven't been a high school teacher since 1982. The last time I taught elementary school was nearly five years ago now. Moreover, the issues I'm concerned with—knowing, learning, power, diversity—are irrelevant abstractions when you're planning your first lesson or disciplining a bunch of rambunctious ninth graders. Eric, one of my students, described the beginning of the year:[3]

> [When he first started this class, he thought] Who is this crazy lady? . . . . He thought that this class was the same old TE thing—nothing but a bunch of out-of-touch professors who have their heads in the clouds (to put it nicely), thinking about the abstract issues in education but never offering anything practical or helpful. By this time in the program, he had become very skeptical about those involved in teacher education and was extremely cynical. . . . He thought he was in for just another semester of "Who am I?", "What does it mean to know something?", "Where does knowledge come from?" And "What does it mean to teach?" blahblahblahblah.

I guessed that my students would feel like Eric, and I worried about how to structure a course that would be helpful. I agreed with him in part: There are professors who are out of touch. But I also disagreed, for I think there is a lot one can learn about how to teach well within the walls of the university (even if teacher educators haven't been able to prove this to the public). I also remembered how hard it was to be a senior, worrying about what to do next, feeling a lot of pressure to grow up. It's hard, as Jennifer said, to pay attention to professors when "so many things in our lives are changing."

© 1994 by the National Center for Research on Teacher Learning

I started my course planning by nominating three overarching goals:

- to help students (teachers) learn to respect one another and learn together
- to help students (teachers) become "well educated" citizens
- to help students learn about "high quality teaching" from the inside and out

And five foundational questions:

- What does it mean to know something?
- How do people learn?
- What is diversity and why does it matter?
- How can we understand power in schools and classrooms and our role in power relationships?
- How are any of these issues related to teaching?

Teaching, for me, is whole cloth, a nubby tapestry of multiple colors, bumpy, richly textured. In this class, I pulled out these goals and these questions as the warp and woof of that cloth (which was which, I couldn't say). They became the structure for this class. In another class, I might choose other questions, embrace other goals, have other intentions and structure.

Generating these goals and questions—as any teacher knows—still left me with questions about *how* to teach. I tried a number of things, all of which I can't go into here. Instead, I'll focus on four kinds of activities that were interwoven throughout the year. The activities don't directly map onto one of my goals, or one of my questions. Rather, I see each set of activities as a site for exploring any of the questions or goals. I think of the territory like a landscape to be explored. My goals and questions are the axes of the territory, my activities different terrains that we visit as a class. It was Dewey who originally helped me to think about my curriculum in this way. In explaining the difference between the logical and psychological aspects of knowing, Dewey (1902/1964) speaks of exploration:

> We may compare the difference between the logical and the psychological to the difference between the notes which an explorer makes in a new country, blazing a trail and finding his way along as best he may, and the finished map that is constructed after the country has been thoroughly explored. The two are mutually dependent. Without the more or less accidental and devious paths traced by the explorer, there would be no facts which could be utilized in the making of the complete and related chart. But no one would get the benefit of the explorer's trip if it was not compared and checked up with similar wanderings undertaken by others; unless the new geographical facts learned, the streams crossed, the mountains climbed, etc., were viewed not as mere accidents in the journey of the particular traveler, but (quite apart from the individual explorer's life) in relation to other similar facts already known. The map orders individual experiences, connecting them with one another irrespective of the local and temporal circumstances and accidents of their original discovery. (pp. 349-350)

The map of my course might look something like this:

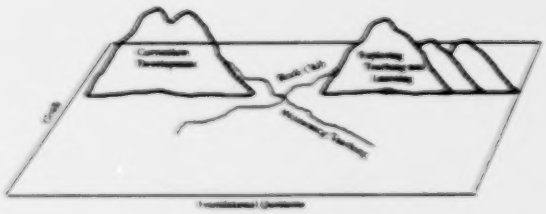

Figure 1. The Map of My Course

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Exploring Knowing and Learning

One set of activities involved investigating questions of knowledge and learning through readings and interviews. One week the students had to watch a movie of their choice and write an essay on the nature of learning. Another week, they had to read a novel or short story and reflect on its insights into learning. I had them read book reviews in the *New York Times* and *New York Review of Books* because I wanted them to think about how reviews reflect issues concerning the nature of knowledge. I also had them interview professors in their home disciplinary departments about how knowledge is invented.

Every time they had one of these assignments, the students wrote essays. Danielle wrote about Darwin, Johanna about Watson and Crick. Leah wrote about a mathematics professor that she had always admired, Liz about another student who was also a novelist. Meanwhile, I would plan an activity to build upon their essays. Often, I had them working in small groups before we convened as a large group to discuss our findings. Many of those discussions and experiences became ideas we carried throughout the year, each with special label. Dewey might claim that we were "ordering individual experience." One day, for example, after they had watched a movie and written about its insights into learning, I asked them to get into small groups and—based on those insights—construct a "theory" of learning. We then met in a large group to array our theories. One group suggested that learning happens through crisis: One can have the same experience over and over again, but there is no change in behavior until there is crisis or tragedy. I drew the following representation on the board:

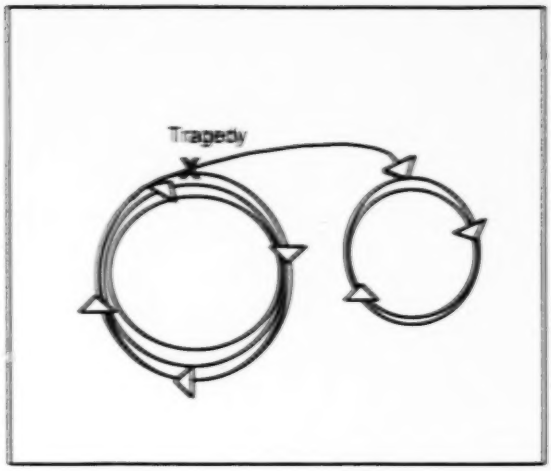

Figure 2. The Tragedy Theory of Learning

Another group suggested that in a class of 30, there might be six people who learn in one way, two that prefer another, ten that have other interests, and so on. I drew a picture of squares and circles and triangles to represent different ways of knowing and learning:

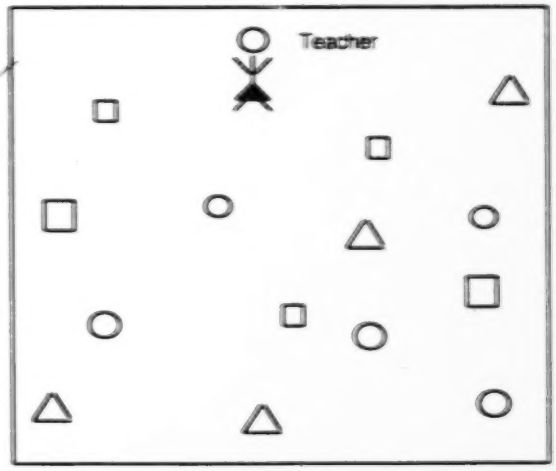

Figure 3. The Dorito Theory of Learners

© 1994 by the National Center for Research on Teacher Learning

From that day on, the idea—that within any class there are students with different interests, understandings, and dispositions—was called "Doritos" (my triangles reminded the students more of food than geometry). These concepts—shared ideas that we had created as a community—became the coin of our conversational realm. Danielle explains:

> Is zero true? Taxi-cab geometry, administration and their hold on teachers, knowing and understanding and there is a difference, and Doritos, circles and squares. All of these ideas were central to the course.

I had many goals during such conversations. Probably foremost, I wanted students to see that they had *ideas*, abstract conceptualizations of the way that the world worked. I wanted them to see those ideas because I believe that whether an idea is tacit or explicit, it still informs one's behavior. In addition, I wanted them to see their ideas so that they would have a sense of themselves as thinkers. Finally, I wanted them to see what I—as a teacher—could do to show them their ideas. Instead of giving them *my* ideas to absorb, in such discussions I was acting a little like a magical mirror: asking them to talk to me and then showing them what *they* already knew. I wanted them to see that this was possible for far too often, beginning teachers think that teachers have the knowledge and students need to take it in. They don't recognize that students bring with them knowledge that teachers—much like Plato wanted us to understand—might be in the business of eliciting that knowledge.

Witnessing Teaching

Another set of activities involved learning subject matter lessons. Often I would teach a lesson on Rosa Parks in which we all constructed silly—and then serious—explanations for why she didn't move to the back of the bus; a discussion on the history of zero or fractions, taxicab geometry; a lesson on etymology and how we classify bugs. I wanted to help my students see other subject matters. I wanted the Spanish majors to learn something of mathematics and the biology majors to learn something about literature. I wanted everyone to feel that their subject matter was attended to and respected. I was hoping that they would learn things from one another, both about their own subject fields and about the nature of knowledge in other domains. I wanted them to taste the range of knowledge, and the intersections of disciplines. I wanted them to respect the integrity, worth, and interesting-ness of both their fellow students and the fields of study those students pursued. I thought this was important because one aspect of a well-educated person is an appreciation for and engagement in several different subject matters. I wasn't sure that this was something my students had learned as undergraduates.

I also wanted them to experience some teaching together: to touch and see and feel good teaching. I have an idea of the kind of teachers I want my students to be: smart, liberating, exciting, thoughtful, kind, plan-full, rational, reflective, open, full of information and ideas, enthusiastic about learning. I'm not sure they've all witnessed that kind of teaching. And so I taught. Melissa noted that she'd seldom encountered such experience:

> I'm glad I was exposed to a situation where the act of being inquisitive and taking the responsibility to seek out one's own answer was encouraged, rather than being molded into academic "sponges" who might accept a particular methodology as if it were handed down as the word of God.

Eric had a similar reaction:

> [Teaching] had all seemed so black-and-white before. If you want to be a good teacher, you do this and you don't do that. If you do X, the students will learn Y, and so on. But he never realized all of the stuff that could be going on while teaching and, furthermore, he never really had a clear concept of what "teaching" was. Everyone had always SAID that not only was the teacher responsible for teaching, but that the students could actually teach each other as well as the teacher. Sure, they all said that, but he had never seen it happen. He had never really noticed the complex nature of teaching and, in the back of his mind, he clung to the notion that teaching was going on only if the teacher was giving a lesson or an activity, standing up in the front of the class. He couldn't imagine anything else because he had never seen it or really felt it before. . . . This class felt

like a community where everyone was in part responsible for the collective. "Isn't that the kind of classroom he hoped to create?" he wondered.

In part, I also taught these lessons for selfish reasons: I thought they'd take me more seriously if they thought I knew things about teaching. And one way to demonstrate that understanding would be to reflect it in my actions: to teach well.

After each lesson, we then talked about my teaching: The decisions I made, my goals, how it felt to be a student. Eric described them in his story about the class:

> The "debriefing sessions" . . . gave students in the class a chance to reflect on what had happened to them as an individual and to the class dynamic as a whole, how each of them might have perceived something distinct, and to make sure that the journey of the day would not be forgotten or missed.

These "debriefing sessions" were meant to make the hidden aspects of teaching more public. I thought if I modeled a critical stance toward myself: admitting confusion; confronting the fact that I didn't make everyone happy; getting people to say that they weren't content, satisfied, and that they were confused, that I would be modeling the kind of openness and reflectiveness that I think is essential to teaching. For instance, I know that my tendency to ask students why they believe something can be experienced as aggressive, invasive, scary. I know that some students feel like Elizabeth:

> I found out really quickly that I had to be on my toes just in case you questioned me. You didn't—and still don't—take simple answers. I love to talk. In fact, it's really hard to keep me quiet. However, I can be quite timid in large groups, and your method of asking students questions had me nervous. Would she call on me today? Would I have some brilliant comment?

One day a student, Dodie, arrived in class for the first time. The class had met for three or four weeks already and we had begun developing a collective sense of one another. I forgot to attend to the fact that Dodie was new to us, and thus did not share this collective sense. In the middle of our discussion, she raised her hand and voiced an opinion. I forget what it was about. I was excited by her idea and wanted her to say more:

> "And why do you think that, Dodie?" I asked in my predictably questioning way.
>
> "Oh, all right, maybe I'm wrong," she said, sinking down in her seat.
>
> "No, no, please, tell me why. I'm not suggesting that you're wrong, but I am interested in your reasoning," I said, trying to save my sinking student.

During the debriefing that day, I used the experience with Dodie to talk about one of the dilemmas I face in teaching. I want to know how and why my students reason through the problems and ideas we discuss. I need to surface that reasoning, those beliefs. So I ask them pretty straightforward questions such as: "Why do you think that?" I know that it makes some students uneasy, so I try to do it with humor and grace, but I often slip up. And no matter what you do, you have little control over how someone else is going to interpret the "text" of your actions. I was worried about this today because of the obvious impact that my questioning had on Dodie. I had asked her to talk through her comment because she had said something very very smart that I wanted to pursue. But I wanted her to explicate her reasoning so that we could have a richer discussion. And I needed to know more about what she meant (teachers all too often overinterpret their students' comments without letting students explain themselves). I was excited and enthusiastic about her idea but she experienced it as aggressive and obnoxious.

The ensuing discussion allowed many students to talk about how they initially had difficulty with my questioning. "At first," Jennifer said, "I thought to myself, 'Who does this woman think she is, a lawyer?' But then I realized that she just wanted to know what was in our heads." Such discussions had multiple purposes: I was trying to model a reflective and modest stance toward my own teaching. I was attempting to show students how the same teaching action can be experienced in multiple ways. I also wanted them to see that a

© 1994 by the National Center for Research on Teacher Learning

teacher's intentions (my excitement) are not always communicated through their actions to the students (Dodie's experience of aggression). Finally, I wanted the class to develop an openness and honesty, a willingness to forgive transgressions and a kindness toward my—and down the road, their—attempts to teach. This kind of culture was essential to me, for eventually, I want my students to learn how to do this themselves, even though it's an uncomfortable and risky business. Danielle described how nerve-wracking it could be:

> I don't want to look inside myself.... This class made me force myself to look inside. I didn't like that at first. In fact, I hated it. It made me vulnerable, and if I could wear armor all of the time, I would be happy. I realized that this is how students feel sometimes, like they are opening themselves up for criticism and could be completely destroyed.

As they taught more and more, we also used their teaching as text for critique (instead of mine). Turning the spotlight on their work teaching was instructive in ways that the critique of mine could never be. For example, Mitra had watched me lead discussions all year and had participated in the critique of those sessions. Yet consider her comments when she found herself leading the discussion:

> You once said, Suzanne, that leading a discussion is like being a "good dancer." You have to make it look like you're not working at all. But trying to lead the class through a discussion of Generation X showed me just how hard that dancing is.

Mitra's comment reminded me, again, that students learn things in different ways, at different times. For an entire year I had discussed with my class the difficulties of managing our discussions: the decisions I had to make, the mires I fell into, my worries about how certain students would react. Yet it wasn't until she tried it herself that Mitra realized how difficult it was to get that group to talk.

Book Club

Around Christmas, we evaluated our work together. "Okay, Suzanne, you've convinced us that we have to continue to learn forever and a day. Now, show us how we can do that as schoolteachers." I thought this was a reasonable challenge: Could I help them invent a means for their own on-going learning? After thinking about this over Christmas, Steve Mattson (who was joining the course at this point) and I came up with the idea of a Book Club. Have the students select books to read (how better to nominate things they want to do and find relevant). Have students lead the discussions (so they can have some experience teaching and being debriefed about teaching, and some experience organizing and facilitating a book club). The idea also appealed to us because it complemented the knowing and learning activities. I believe teachers need to be well educated people who read widely and often. We started the year by reading book reviews, essays, and short stories; it seemed a natural progression to then read books.

We started with a book I picked—*Lost in Translation* by Eva Hoffman. Later selections were picked by the students: *Generation X*, *Buried Child*, *Like Water for Chocolate*, *Woman Warrior*, and *Everything I Ever Needed to Know I Learned in Kindergarten* were some of the texts we visited. Students taught the books in groups, and each group met with me beforehand to discuss what they wanted to do, and why. I thought of these meetings as tutorials in teaching. I learned a lot during those discussions, although I'm not sure that they did. For example, almost every group came to the meeting with a simple plan: We'll ask one question and open the floor for discussion. Their reasoning: This is a TE class and no one ever has any trouble talking. I was a little horrified and insulted by this way of thinking. After all, did they think that that was how Steve and I prepared for our classes? We came up with one question, and any old question would do? I realized that this was one of the consequences of, as Mitra recalled, "dancing well." My students didn't understand how hard we thought about what would work and why, who the students were and what they cared about. They didn't know that Steve and I had several plans for the time we spent together, backups if what we initially tried fell flat. We even had laid

out schedules of how long each thing would take, and had discussions about which one of us would lead and when. Quickly, I learned to ask them some questions:

> What do you want the rest of the class to *learn* from this discussion?
>
> Given what you know about the students in the class, can you predict some of the reactions?
>
> What is Plan B if Plan A fails?
>
> Who is going to do what? Is one person going to lead, and the others support? Are you going to share leadership?
>
> How are you going to assess how successful the discussion was?
>
> What instructional strategies are you going to use? Will there be small groups? A lecture? Role plays?

Taking responsibility for the class provided my students with a different perspective on teaching. Mitra and Charlie's group, for instance, opened with a question that they thought would be interesting. After they asked it, no one had anything to say. Mitra started to squirm; Charlie took off his overshirt, "Is it really hot in here?" After each group led a discussion, I led the debriefing, asking the group leaders to talk about how they felt, or the other students to talk about what they thought. It was my hope that the teaching would lead to some insights that other aspects of the class had not. In some cases it did. Leah noted, for example, that

> The book club gave me some surprising insights into how I teach. My tendency is to worry about time an awful lot. The first time we presented our book, I was keeping notes on how long it took to present each section. Yet, even while I was doing that, I realized how futile it was to struggle for that kind of control. I had to relax and let the conversation flow, even if it wasn't in the direction I intended. I learned that I need to flow along with the class, and be prepared to guide it gently.

For other students, the book club served other purposes. Melissa was just happy for the rambling conversations, a liberating and relaxing experience after four years of the student grind. Dan, who really doesn't like to read very much, found himself relaxing and calming down after a stressful week of school when reading *Like Water for Chocolate*. Mitra liked hearing how I could find things about teaching in anything and everything that we read. Elizabeth loved reading about Asian culture in *Woman Warrior*, for it helped her think about this abstract notion of "multiculturalism" and teaching. Dodie, on the other hand, found the experience frustrating and amateurish, "I did a better job when I was in fifth grade with my friends."

Curriculum Development

Finally, because I wanted them to do something that they believed was clearly related to teaching, I had the students complete two different curriculum projects. During the first term they had to critique a unit from the perspective of the knowing and learning questions we had pursued during that term. After January, they had to create their own "polished stone," beginning with a topic they knew little about and ending with a unit plan that they could use the next year. In preparation for completing these assignments, they analyzed and critiqued textbooks, interviewed professors, investigated topics they might teach but about which they knew little. They interviewed students about their knowledge and interest, and developed alternative assessments and a few lessons. These forays were intended to feel relevant and practical and to help them learn to "inquire" into the ideas that they would be teaching about.

It was probably the piece of class I felt least satisfied with. I told them it felt disconnected, and that I hadn't found ways to weave that work in with the rest of our discussions. Some, like Dan, agreed that it was "hopelessly disconnected." Others felt differently. Jennifer, for instance, remarked that:

> The curriculum project was great, I thought. I never realized how much work can go into planning a lesson! But what was great was that I learned other ways of preparing the lesson rather than straight from the books. This project tied up the whole year for me. All along . . . I had been discovering other ways to learn. You

© 1996 by the National Center for Research on Teacher Learning

> gave us the opportunity (a much nicer word that assignment, don't you think?) to create something very useful—at least in my situation—with what we had learned. It all fell into place for me with this project.

Kevin had a similar experience:

> Things from all my TE experiences and classes started to come together when I thought hard about how I needed to work this unit out. I started thinking about scientific discourse and how powerless some of the students would feel as they entered my chemistry classroom for the first time. I tried to come up with ways to lower that anxiety. I thought about their possible misconceptions and trying to fit everything they learn new into that misconception. I worked on changing the misconceptions they might have and prepared ways to find the misconceptions. Planning my unit gave me a chance to struggle with all of these issues. Everything started to seem relevant and I felt that now I had a chance to work on improving my ability to master these issues. I was implementing the ideas of the last two years.

I still believe in the idea of curriculum development, for I respect my students' need to have "stuff," materials that they can use now and in the future. The challenge for me—in the future—is to find ways to better integrate that work into our discussions and activities so that more students have Jennifer's and Kevin's experiences.

You can't really get a sense of the class from this list of activities, but it was a good group and the students taught me a lot about learning to teach, about graduating from college, about the clash between the university and schools. Their observations and questions made me think, specifically about what I thought I was teaching them about teaching. These thoughts were with me always. But they became especially prominent one day when a student softly murmured as an aside: "This is not a methods course." The comment took me aback, and sent my head areel. Was I teaching methods? If so, how could I help my students see that? If not, what was I teaching?

Where's the Method?

The week after Derek made that comment, Steve and I asked each student to think about his or her best teacher. Charlie's best teacher was a science teacher who didn't let him get away with anything. Melissa's best teacher taught Spanish with an infectious enthusiasm and passion. Wendy's best teacher didn't assume that she was a trouble maker (like her friends) and found ways to make Wendy feel good about herself and her writing. After listening to each student's story, Jennifer made a claim, an attempt to differentiate between the different kinds of capacities that were mentioned during the discussion: "There are two categories of things teachers need to know. The innate ability to get inside of someone's mind (and you can't learn that)," she initially claimed, "and pedagogy, you know, teaching skills. And THAT you can learn." Jennifer's second category *is* what teachers have often been taught as "methods."

I realized that I have another idea about "methods," for now, a tripartite conception. Clumsy as they may be, I'll temporarily label the pieces: "Subject Matter as Methodized," "Manner as Method," and "Methods of Thinking."

Subject Matter as Methodized

Every subject matter has a method, and for part of the year, we explored disciplines and their ways of knowing. We spent a lot of time trying to understand how knowledge is created. Students interviewed "knowledge creators"—writers, poets, chemists, mathematicians, literary critics—and asked them questions about where knowledge comes from. They read biographies and autobiographies of "knowers"—scientists, novelists, historians—and tried to learn something about how people came to make intellectual discoveries. We did other things as well.

Through all these activities, I wanted to see if we could explore the ways in which "method" was an inextricable part of "subject matter." These are often seen as separate entities, as Dewey (1916/1964) explains:

> The idea that mind and the world of things and persons are two separate and independent realms—a theory which philosophically is known as dualism—carries with it the conclusion that method and subject matter of instruction are separate affairs. Subject matter then becomes a ready-made systematized classification of facts and principles of the world of nature and man. Method then has for its province a consideration of the ways in which this antecedent subject matter may be best presented and impressed upon the mind; or, a consideration of the ways in which the mind may be externally brought to bear upon the matter so as to facilitate its acquisition and possession. (p. 387)

Dewey goes on to argue that subject matter and method are *not* separate, such an assumption, he claims, is "radically false":

> The fact that the material of a science is organized is evidence that it has already been subjected to intelligence; it has been methodized, so to say. Zoology as a systematic branch of knowledge represents crude scattered facts of our ordinary acquaintance with animals after they have been subjected to careful examination, to deliberate supplementation, and to arrangement to bring out connections which assist observation, memory, and further inquiry. . . . Method means that arrangement *of* subject matter which makes it most effective in use. Never is method something outside of the material. (p. 388)

To illustrate this idea, I taught a history lesson about Rosa Parks in which students had to construct historical explanations and consider the nature of historical knowledge. Historians interpret, draw on assumptions and values, use what facts they can find, create alternative explanations for the same events. As one historian puts it:

> [H]istorians are left forever chasing shadows, painfully aware of their inability ever to reconstruct an ideal world in its completeness, however thorough or revealing their documentation. Of course, they make do with other work: the business of formulating problems, of supplying explanations about cause and effect. But the certainty of such answers always remains contingent on their unavoidable remoteness from their subjects. We are doomed to be forever hailing someone who has just gone around the corner and out of earshot. (Schama, 1991, p. 320)

The methods of history, therefore, are inextricably tied to the subject matter. The stories that are told (the subject matter) are shaped and defined by the means historians have to construct those stories. Readers who know nothing about historical method cannot entirely grasp the meaning of histories: their limitations, tentativeness, fragility, humanness. Our struggles to understand the relationship between knowledge, truth and interpretation made an impression on my students. Liz said, "Ever since the Rosa Parks discussion, my mind has been warped! I still don't know what 'truth' is! I wonder what my future students will say truth is . . ."

Liz's worries are mine, for the same fragility of knowledge holds true in science, in mathematics, in language (although we seldom learn about the limitations of knowledge in school). And they have implications for what we should be teaching. Typically in school, we're taught theories as if they are facts, interpretations as if they are some singular, forever and ever *truth*. I was worried that although my students had undergraduate degrees in an array of disciplines, they hadn't learned these things. Charlie's comments validated my concern:

> I had always thought as a student that science was all about facts. Traditionally, I was taught to memorize rules, names, and laws and—if I could—I understood science. On the contrary—with the help of this class—I found that science is quite the opposite. In my schooling I did not come to see scientists as explorers trying to explain the physical world around them. I was rarely exposed to the concept that science is about asking questions and proposing theories. Rather, I was taught that you memorize what you are told because that is the way that the world works. Thankfully, by questioning my past, traditional experiences, I have come to realize a new meaning of science. By definition, science is a branch of knowledge and study. But somewhere along the line, someone forgot about the idea of "study."

When I had them constructing narratives about Rosa Parks, I wanted to do two things at once: Have them see what it takes to create historical knowledge (albeit in brief, underdeveloped, and underinformed ways) and have them see how the ways that one teaches affect the understandings students develop. I wanted the teaching and learning to produce an understanding of Parks

© 1994 by the National Center for Research on Teacher Learning

and an understanding of the tentativeness and interpretativeness of that understanding. And so "method" had two meanings in that class: the methods of history (interpretation, problem identification, searching for cause and effect, assuming things about human intention and behavior, and so on) and my pedagogical methods (having them work in small groups, generating silly—and then serious—explanations). For me, the two were bound together: I had to make my "pedagogical method" choices based on my assumptions about "subject matter method."

I asked them to think about these same issues when they taught their own lessons: The foreign language group had us eating Spanish food, listening to Spanish music, speaking Spanish words. They wanted to communicate the cultural aspects of language and knowing by engaging us in a culture-laden experience. The science group started with an experiment; the mathematics group tried to help us understand the history of mathematics and how mathematicians' thinking has changed. Each group tried to explore one way to connect "subject matter method" with "pedagogical method." Without doing it well, I now see that I was trying to help them see that "method" is bigger than that traditional conception most of us enter teaching with. And that methods of inquiry within our relevant subject matters might bear some relation to methods of pedagogy in our classrooms. This might seem an obvious point. Yet no one ever explained it to me as a teacher-to-be. One of my students, Eric, spent the entire year trying to work on the idea:

> In about the third or fourth week of class, this Suzanne person said something that really made him think—not like before where he thought about TE things superficially for the sake of making the teacher think he was doing his part and contributing his two cents worth to the mind-numbing conversation—but he REALLY thought about it this time and what it could possibly mean. He left class with her words bouncing around in his head and couldn't leave them alone. But all she said was "how you teach is as important as what you teach." It was so simple, but it meant a lot of things.

Method as Manner

But all along we explored other aspects of "method," too. Another part of method I'll temporarily call "manner." Fenstermacher (1990) once wrote:

> Nearly everything that a teacher does while in contact with students carries moral weight. Every response to a question, every assignment handed out, every discussion on issues, every resolution of a dispute, every grade given to a student carries with it the moral character of the teacher. This moral character can be thought of as the *manner* of the teacher.
>
> Manner is an accompaniment to everything teachers do in their classrooms. Chemistry can be taught in myriad ways, but however it is taught, the teacher will always be giving directions, explaining, demonstrating, checking, adjudicating, motivating, reprimanding, and in all these activities displaying the manner that marks him or her as morally well-developed or not. Teachers who understand their impact as moral educators take their manner quite seriously. They understand that they cannot expect honesty without being honest or generosity without being generous or diligence without themselves being diligent. Just as we understand that teachers must engage in critical thinking with students if they expect students to think critically in their presence, they must exemplify moral principles and virtues in order to elicit them from students. Indeed, there is more to this. . . . Teachers must also . . . draw attention to what they are doing and why, hold it up for the students to see and understand, and, by suggestion and demeanor, call on students to follow along. There must then be support for those students to model the teacher and some sense of safety for those who are not yet ready to do so. (pp. 134-135)

When Charlie talked about his best teacher, he mentioned the fact that the teacher expected Charlie to take responsibility. "He didn't put up with my crap," Charlie told us. Melissa mentioned the fact that her best teacher created a real community, a group of students who knew each other well. And that she was really well educated. She knew a lot. Wendy told us a story of learning to believe in herself and the role a teacher played in helping her see herself as a thinker, reader, writer. It was this discussion that led Jennifer to her claim about "the innate ability to get inside of someone's head." To me—this talk sounds like

Fenstermacher's manner. Teaching requires developing means to facilitate honesty, diligence, personal responsibility, generosity, critical thinking.

If all it took to facilitate such things was a keen mind, a gentle spirit, and good intentions, we would have all met more "great teachers." We'd all *be* good teachers. But we're not, because it's hard work finding ways to teach personal responsibility, to help people say what they are thinking, to create an atmosphere in which there can be disagreement and debate, honesty, diversity, turmoil. I want to claim that developing these skills and understandings, commitments and dispositions is also "method." And that they are skills that can be learned (even though you are all right to remind me of how tied they are to personality). Dewey nominates a few critical characteristics: directness, open-mindedness, whole heartedness, and responsibility. He calls these traits method. Consider how Dewey (1916/1964) talks about the first two:

> Confidence is a good name for what is intended by the term directness. It should not be confused, however, with *self* confidence which may be a form of self consciousness—of "cheek." Confidence is not a name for what one thinks or feels about his attitude; it is not reflex. It denotes the straightforwardness with which one goes at what he has to do. It denotes not *conscious* trust in the efficacy of one's power but unconscious faith in the possibilities of the situation. It signifies rising to the needs of the situation. (pp. 397-398)

> Openness of mind means accessibility of mind to any and every consideration that will throw light upon the situation that needs to be cleared up, and that will help determine the consequences of acting this way or that. . . . Intellectual growth means constant expansion of horizons and consequent formation of new purposes and new responses. These are impossible without an active disposition to welcome points of view hitherto alien; an active desire to entertain considerations which modify existing purposes. Retention of capacity to grow is the reward of such intellectual hospitality. The worst thing about stubbornness of mind, about prejudices, is that they arrest development; they shut the mind off from new stimuli. Open-mindedness means retention of a childlike attitude; closed-mindedness means premature intellectual old age. (pp. 398-399)

Clearly, Dewey thinks of method in a broader sense than the traditional methods classes we've all been offered in our education. He puts "method" and "attitude" in the same sentence:

> Expressed in terms of attitude of the individual the traits of good method are straightforwardness, flexible intellectual interest or open-minded will to learn, integrity of purpose, and acceptance of responsibility for the consequences of one's activity including thought. (Dewey, 1916/1964, p. 403)

I heard my students' recollections of their best teachers echoing in Dewey's words. Maybe it wasn't an accident that Wendy's teacher was able to make her feel intellectually worthwhile. Instead, that teacher knew something about how to listen to Wendy and see a person instead of pigeon-holing her the way that others had done. Neither was it serendipity that Melissa's teacher was well educated. And Melissa didn't notice that by accident. That teacher was able to communicate a quality of mind, a commitment to learning that enabled Melissa to embrace it, to want to be like that. These teachers—and the others we discussed—had developed *methods* of manner, ways of facilitating learning in their students. They learned how to listen, to hear, to probe. They learned how to use their bodies and their humor and their minds to create environments and relationships that affected some students' commitment and capacity to learn. It was striking that not one of my students gave reasons why someone was a good teacher that were based on the instructional strategies they used. I wanted them to see that teaching—and its methods—was an endeavor that embraced much more than a technology of organizing cooperative groups, lecturing clearly, establishing disciplinary procedures, using alternative forms of assessment and the like.

But if these things are methods—Dewey's "attitude," Fenstermacher's "manner"—how am I—as a teacher educator—to teach my students, prospective teachers—*those* kinds of methods? I don't know. Right now, primarily from the inside out. By that, I mean that I've tried to *have* a manner, to be aware of that manner, and to talk about it—honestly and critically—with my students: about the choices I was making, about my worries and fears, about dilemmas and mistakes

© 1990 by the National Center for Research on Teacher Learning

and occasional triumphs. I was thinking that if they "lived" the experience of a teacher with some of those manners, they might learn something about developing their own manner. So I tried to create a classroom in which we can laugh and disagree, argue, get hurt, forgive, act kindly toward others, experience intellectual respect, be challenged, and the like. I tried to get them to talk to one another, and learn from others' experiences. I made my thinking public. I gave them a lot of control and choice. I kept hoping that they might see how I think about teaching and develop their own version, one that treats education like the complicated enterprise it is. I wished that they might see how much fun it is to keep learning, and how it's okay to be critical of yourself—and to open yourself up to the critical comments of your students.

Steve's manner, for example, had a direct impact on K.C. as is clear from a story she tells about her experiences as a student in two different university classes (one of which was ours):

> The most important lesson I have learned concerns teacher flexibility and the ability to receive criticism objectively. Some students have suggestions which could only improve the atmosphere and lessons which occur in the classroom. Yet, some teachers take this kind of criticism poorly. My theater professor is just such a person. When the students tried to voice their opinions and confusions concerning proper class criticism, this particular professor dismissed these fears and refused to discuss the issue. Also, after I had a personal discussion with the professor on the topic, she began to treat me very poorly and, at times, was openly rude. I find this behavior extremely distressing. Teachers are supposed to be open, understanding, and objective. Yet I know that this goal is difficult to achieve at all times. My theater professor is a perfect example. So how do teachers balance their human side with their educational responsibilities?
>
> I think the answer to this question has a lot to do with the type of teacher you are and the type of educator you wish to become. Take Steve, for example. I wasn't really happy with one of our class sessions, mainly because I felt that the class and myself lacked a chance to voice our opinions. I went to Steve, as I had done with my other professor, and this experience was completely different. First of all, Steve listened to me without becoming defensive. This is a skill which is very important to maintaining a positive teacher/student relationship. Also, a teacher needs to realize that receiving feedback from students is an opportunity to hear whether or not your teaching style is effective, that the experience can be a positive one for them as well. Therefore, an open relationship can only benefit both parties. This positive experience was extremely empowering for me. I felt like I was a valued member of the class. This feeling is one which I want all of my students to experience. Yet one of my major fears is that I will react in the same manner as my theater professor. How does a teacher *learn* to receive criticism openly? Maybe I should talk to Steve about it because I really don't know. I think that this is a skill one must learn. It takes practice to receive criticism well.

While it is important to me that K.C. identified some of her goals as a teacher (to be open, to receive criticism well), it is more important to me that she talks as if she's on the beginning of such a journey and that learning such things means more than simply embracing the notion. For KC, being open to criticism is a craft—not just a commitment—that takes time to learn and hone. She realizes that learning to teach—at least this part of it—takes much more than simply saying, "I want to be open." It takes time, practice, patience, and openness.

Methods of Thinking and Learning

And yet, there is a third way I thought of methods in this class. I believe that teaching is both behavior and thought, instructional strategy and pedagogical reasoning. The thinking is hard. "You make me think so hard that my head hurts afterwards. I like that!" Liz declared. Mitra said:

> [I found] what was said [in class] so interesting, challenging, real. I often left class frustrated, confused, or exhausted. I left class thinking—sometimes about learning and knowing, sometimes about Dantos and tangrab geometry—but I was always thinking.

Teachers need to be, as Elizabeth noted, "more conscious of their choices, assumptions, beliefs, and desires." A teacher can't just have a good idea, a lot of enthusiasm, and a helpful group of students. Sometimes—if you're lucky—things will work out,

but sometimes they won't. Teachers need to be more professional than that. Like artists, they need practice, knowledge of the available materials, and the skills of using the tools. I return to Dewey:

> The method of teaching is the method of an art of action intelligently directed by ends. But the practice of a fine art is far from being a matter of extemporized inspirations. Study of the operations and results of those in the past who have greatly succeeded is essential. There is always a tradition, or schools of art, definite enough to impress beginners, and often to take them captive. Methods of artists in every branch depend upon thorough acquaintance with materials and tools; the painter must know the canvas, pigments, brushes, and the technique of manipulation of all his appliances. Attainment of this knowledge requires persistent and concentrated attention to objective materials. The artist studies the progress of his own attempts to see what succeeds and what fails. The assumption that there are no alternatives between following ready-made rules and trusting to native gifts, the inspiration of the moment and undirected "hard work," is contradicted by the procedures of every art.
>
> Such matters as knowledge of the past, of current technique, of material, of the ways in which one's own best results are assured, supply the material for what may be called general method. (pp. 393-394)

Teaching, Dewey goes on to say, involves using those general methods "intellectually." Using tools intellectually involves learning how to *think* like a teacher: to reason pedagogically, to wonder about what students know and care about, to listen to their contributions, to select instructional tools that might be helpful avenues to educative experiences, to learn from experience. Developing this capacity to think and learn is another way of thinking about method. This leads be back to the same question: How to teach about these methods? How to teach people how to think?

I often showed my students how I was thinking, learning. Steve did the same thing, openly discussing his worries and concerns. We also created occasions for them to think like teachers. When they had to select the readings for the whole class during the second semester, they had to engage in teacherly thinking about curriculum: What would people like to read? What would be good for them to think about? When we asked them to plan for the discussions, they had to think of themselves as the teacher and of their peers as students: What tasks would engage them substantively? How will students like this reading? What will they want to talk about? What activities might help me pursue my goals? What is it that I want people to use this reading to think about, to learn from? How are we going to act in front of everyone else? When we discussed how the classes went, in public, with the help of the entire class, they also were thinking like teachers. During the curriculum development project, we asked them to do a series of tasks that required inquiry. As K.C. commented, "Just like students have to research papers before they turn them in, maybe teachers need to research curriculum before they teach it." In small and large ways, then, I tried to find multiple moments of practice thinking like teachers, or watching me think like one.

I'm not sure how successful I was, for helping others both see inside your head and learn to see inside their own might be impossible. But Mitra observed at the end of the year that:

> Perhaps what is most significant [to me] is that you didn't give me the "tricks" I thought I needed. Instead of the traditional "how to" approach to teacher education, you've shown me how to view teaching as an intellectual process. You've shown me that it's not about mastering a subject area. It's thinking about learning and knowing, power and diversity. And transforming those thoughts into a practice.

Jennifer also left thinking about teaching as intellectual work:

> This class forces me to think about learning—mine and others—in order to better understand myself and to be able to convey that to my future students. That cliché about love—that you can never really love anybody until you can love (at least like) yourself—can be applied to MSU's TE philosophy about education. You cannot really teach others how to think until you know how to think yourself. You need to have some skill at unraveling the intellectual knot in your mind and this class and TE have helped me pull at the heart of that knot. The thing about this class is that the casual observer could walk in, listen to the conversations, and never know that it was a TE

© 1990 by the National Center for Research on Teacher Learning

> course. It's sort of like intellectual calisthenics. Friday allows your mind to limber up when it's become a little stiff. . . . I value that most of my search into how I am going to be a teacher is really an intellectual search. My TE knowledge is not going to be part of the 80% of the forgettable knowledge that someone says undergraduates acquire . . . because so much of what I learned here were skills at how to know things, how to question things, and what to make of them when I did.

I believe that teaching *is* an intellectual process (as well as a moral enterprise), and that the more prospective teachers learn to think in teacherly ways, the better prepared they are to meet the needs of diverse students. Teaching, for me, is not about acquiring a toolbag of tricks, a repertoire of handy lessons that "work" (although those activities and ideas are necessary components and I cling to each "polished stone" I've generated in my work as a teacher). Rather, it's about establishing goals, creating communities, listening to your charges, using their knowledge and skills to enhance the enterprise, and so on. It requires constant, deep, and critical thought. And to improve it requires the capacity to learn from experience (something we do not all do naturally or well). Central to this conception of teaching is the awareness that we are human instruments—like historians or doctors or therapists—and that who we are influences what we think and see and do. The more we know, therefore, about that person, the more control we have over using our humanness to its greatest advantage and doing the least damage. Dewey uses the analogy of playing the piano: "Piano playing is not hitting the keys at random." Such a strategy produces an unpleasant cacophony more often than pleasing music. Teachers need to protect their students from a similar mayhem, and learn to "play the keys" in an orderly, thoughtful, moral, and reasoned fashion.

But Will They Be Better Teachers?

I write this essay with more than a little trepidation. Some might find me confused, a fuzzy-headed academic who doesn't know *what* she's doing. (Much like what my students assume before we get to know one another.) Perhaps this is simply another example of Kramer's follies, a foolish academic spouting rhetoric with little relation to the reality of what teachers need to learn and how. Or maybe this is a perfect example of why we should wrest the education of teachers out of the hands of teacher educators. Others might find me self-indulgent, focusing solely on my own practice. My critics might be right. I don't know. I do believe that I'm a good teacher, not at all confused. I have clear ideas and opinions. I know what I'm doing, and I do it well. My students know, as Wendy observed, that I "have an agenda." "Always, every time, after leaving this class, my wheels were kicking for several hours. It was a good feeling: My brain has been somewhat neglected for the last year or two," Derek said. That's the way most of my students feel, and I take it as a sign that I'm stretching their minds, helping them learn.

Yet even though I think I know what I'm doing on a daily basis, my thinking and actions are fluid, dynamic. They change as I acquire wisdom, through experiences both pleasant and painful. I'm a permanent work-in-progress. I would hope that we all are, no matter what we do. I think that's a sign of intelligent life.

It might be most troubling to outsiders that this discussion is about method, for method (read here instructional strategies) could very well be at the heart of what outsiders think teacher education *ought* to be about. Many people may think that acquiring the capacity to teach is merely a matter of first, learning a subject matter and second, learning a few techniques (lecturing, Socratic discussion, using technology, setting up small groups, and the like) with which to deliver that subject matter. Teachers might also need a dash about discipline and a few tips on testing. But that might be it. Jennifer had her own version of this set of assumptions:

> The vast majority of American citizens think that a teacher education program consists of reading texts that describe in great detail how to use the chalk board, how to fill out a hall pass, or how to make those ridiculous paper creations that are "decorating" our room. Perhaps before I was immersed in TE, I subscribed to this fallacy, too.

I don't know where these beliefs come from, although others have hypothesized. More than likely, it has something to do with the fact that teaching is falsely familiar. Unlike more glamorous professions,

everyone thinks they know what it takes to teach. We've all taught a little something and seen a lot of teaching, both good and bad.

I don't agree that teaching is so readily understood. Teaching well is as specialized a way of thinking and acting as any craft: parenting, lawyering, nursing, researching, piano playing. Teaching *well* entails listening with care and respect to the other people in the room, having a clear sense of purpose and being willing to alter that sense when we learn something new, and hold on to it when we know we're right. It requires knowing a lot more about the ideas being taught than what we learned in high school or college. Ideas keep changing, and so must teachers. Thus, teaching requires a fluidity, adaptability, flexibility, openness and an inquiring stance that many people don't possess . . . and a lot of specialized skill and deep knowledge.

Yet, sadly enough, no matter what our field—law, medicine, history, business—we know that there are many people out there with degrees but no skill, credentials but no expertise. As a teacher educator, I don't intend to put my stamp of approval on anyone who promises to be content with the status quo, doing the same thing year in and year out. I want my students to become good teachers, and to do that they need to expand their ideas about the methods needed. Yes, you need to know how to use the latest software to support your instruction, and you need to have a clear sense of how to teach your students to act responsibly, in disciplined ways. You also need to know how to lecture well and how to help your students teach one another when it's appropriate.

I knew all of that when I started teaching. I learned some it in my teacher education classes. Some of those nascent understandings were borne of my own experiences as an oldest child, as a swimming instructor at the YMCA, as a tutor for less talented mathematics students. But there's a lot no one taught me. No one taught me that some of my students might look at the floor—and not in my eye—as a sign of respect. No one taught me that if I pushed one student like Charlie's teacher did of him, other students might be silenced out of the fear that I would do the same to them. No one taught me that I might need to know six alternative models for electricity instead of one, because students bring different talents, experiences, background knowledge, and interests. No one taught me that a note I write in earnest concern for a student's well-being might be interpreted by the student as patronizing or condescending. No one taught me what it means to respect someone's mind: not just believe in him or her, but help uncover—both for the student and for myself—their special talents and understandings. No one taught me how to be unthreatened by criticism and open to change . . . how to make my thinking public, and my capacity to question my assumptions and actions endless.

I've taught now for nearly 20 years, and I've learned a lot. But I would have learned more if I hadn't had to discover by myself that teaching means learning something new all the time and that there are ways of both thinking about pedagogy and of inquiring into experience that help you learn more. I was smart enough when I graduated from college to understand that the methods of teaching go far beyond learning to set up role plays; that they might have something to do with the way I thought or carried myself. I would have been a better teacher to my earliest students if someone had bothered to teach me that the "methods" required in teaching are multiple: Teachers need to know how to instruct; how to identify, explore, and solve pedagogical problems; how to inquire into and learn from their experience; and how to act in ways respectful and moral. Perhaps we would wish those things for everyone, but they are necessary conditions for good teaching. And as a methods instructor (who is perhaps a touch crazy, as Eric worried), the challenge I see before me is to find ways to nurture the development of *all* of these methods in the company I keep: future teachers. All the while knowing that the place where I'll learn the most about how to do that is in their company, using—and refining—the very methods I hope to teach them.

© 1990 by the National Center for Research on Teacher Learning

Notes

[1] The place that I work in is rich with interesting people and ideas. The thoughts I lay out here are mine, but collaboratively constructed by many colleagues, including: Deborah Ball, Carol Barnes, Helen Featherstone, Jay Featherstone, Magdalene Lampert, Steve Mattson, and Dirck Roosevelt all of whom contributed to this essay. In addition, these ideas have been nurtured and shaped by my students.

[2] For the second half of the year, I co-taught the course with a colleague, Steve Mattson. His contributions to the course were immeasurable and we easily could have written an essay together about our experiences. It feels, in many ways, both awkward and unfair not to write this essay with him. Much of what I report, we did together as a team. But much of what I report happened as I worked alone. In this essay, I choose to write alone but I want to make it clear that for half the year I had a partner in crime and that his hand-holding, company, and insights made a qualitative difference in my understanding and teaching.

[3] Throughout the essay, I sometimes use comments written by my students. These comments come from evaluations of the course, small essays I had them write, and journal entries. Sometimes students used the first person, at other times they wrote stories in the third person. I have left all of their comments in the way they were written. I also use their real names, with permission. I do this because I feel that their comments are more eloquent than anything I could say and they deserve recognition for their insights.

References

Cusick, P. A. (1992). *The educational system: Its nature and logic*. New York: McGraw Hill.

Dewey, J. (1902/1964). The child and the curriculum. In R. D. Archambault (Ed.), *John Dewey on education: Selected writings* (pp. 337-358). Chicago: University of Chicago Press. (Original published in 1902.)

Dewey, J. (1916/1964). The nature of method. In R. D. Archambault (Ed.), *John Dewey on education: Selected writings* (pp. 387-403). Chicago: University of Chicago Press. (Original published in 1916.)

Fenstermacher, G. (1990). Some moral considerations on teaching as a profession. In J. I. Goodlad, R. Soder, & K. A. Sirotnik (Eds.), *The moral dimensions of teaching*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Kramer, R. (1991). *Ed school follies: The miseducation of America's teachers*. New York: Free Press.

Schama, S. (1991). *Dead certainties: (Unwarranted speculations)*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf.

Smith, P. (1990). *Killing the spirit: Higher education in America*. New York: Viking.

Sykes, C. J. (1988). *Prof scam: Professors and the demise of higher education*. New York: St. Martin's Press.